AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives news accounts and editorial interpretations of matters affecting labor concerning it in the industrial, legislative and judicial fields, and contains other information of benefit to the trade union movement.

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WHOLE NO. 1672 — WILLIAM GREEN, President — WASHINGTON, D. C., TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 1943 — GEORGE MEANY, Secretary-Treasurer — VOL. 33, NO. 17

WE PLEDGE— 1 MILLION DOLLARS IN WAR SAVINGS BONDS FOR VICTORY

FACING the FACTS

With PHILIP PEARL

The Government of the United States is using its strong right arm to prevent inflation while its left hand is busily engaged in creating inflation. This is the bitter and paradoxical truth which faces the workers of our country today.

It's time we quit pulling our punches and exposed the facts. Not out of a desire to be critical, but in an effort to be practical we must speak out.

The harsh truth is that the Administration has failed dismally in its duty to control prices and has never made the slightest effort to roll back prices in accordance with the instructions given by President Roosevelt in his executive order.

The blame for this failure rests in the first place on Prentiss M. Brown, OPA Administrator. Mr. Brown, however, may not be entirely at fault. Let's look at the record.

Mr. Brown, a former Senator from Michigan, was appointed to head the OPA after Leon Henderson had resigned under pressure. We did not consider Mr. Henderson an effective price administrator but the record shows he was active enough in his job to incur the displeasure of powerful business interests who resented any Government interference with their determination to charge whatever the traffic would bear for food and other necessities of life.

The Appeasement Policy

Much of the criticism of Henderson emanated from a group in Congress who are the self-appointed spokesmen for business interests. This Congressional bloc made Henderson's life miserable with constant caterwaulings against the shortcomings of OPA. The newspapers, always alert in the defense of their advertisers, played up the attacks on Henderson and helped to run him out of office.

As his successor, the President chose a lame duck Senator who had loyally supported Administration policies. Thus the appointment was considered political. But the real political nature of the appointment was the fact that it was intended to appease the Congressional bloc which was trying to control policies.

Naturally, when Brown took office he felt he had a mandate to butter up to the high-pressure opponents of price control. He made the rafters ring with denunciations of inflation and assailed wage increases with all the vigor of a Texas Congressman to the delight of the tory press. At the same time he proceeded to relax ceilings on prices wherever and whenever the business interests involved howled loudly enough.

In other words, Brown sought to become popular with the profiteers. In that way he thought he could take the heat off the OPA.

To carry out his objective, Brown appointed assistants who represented private business interests and who were drawn from the labor members of his advisory council.

The result has been a continuous procession of price increases accompanied by an equally serious deterioration in the quality of the products sold.

Thus the OPA has betrayed the interests of the American people and has injured the nation's war effort.

Politics With Prices

As we indicated before, however, the blame does not fall entirely upon Brown. His superiors share the responsibility. They should have made it clear to Brown that his function was not to play politics with prices but to hold prices down and keep them down, regardless of the squawks of profiteers.

Labor has been patient thus far but it is now deeply aroused over the farcical performances of the OPA.

The workers of America find themselves caught in a fatal squeeze. The Government has placed rigid ceilings on wage increases, even where the increase is the cost of living makes such increases necessary to enable workers to get along. At the same time the Government has by devious and hypocritical methods lifted the lid on prices, especially food prices. Many basic articles of food are now away out of the reach of the American worker's pocketbook.

This situation calls for action. It calls for a complete overhauling of OPA policies. It calls for a stern directive from President Roosevelt to arrest the runaway cost of living and to roll back prices to where they belong.

It is doubtful whether Brown is the man to do this job. The question is whether he can accomplish a complete about-face and save face. The people of this country have lost confidence in the OPA during his administration.

Labor is in position at least to insist that Brown revert and that he use by every possible means, even if it hurts. Labor is willing and has been willing to accept stern wage stabilization. But it insists that wage stabilization be accompanied by strict price stabilization. Otherwise, the workers of this country will consider themselves double-crossed.

Meany Asks President Roosevelt To Order Retail Food Prices Cut

Washington, D. C.—Warning that to the prices of food have "reached a point so high that the future of our war effort is most seriously threatened," AFL Secretary-Treasurer George Meany called upon President Roosevelt to order the Office of Price Administration to roll back retail food prices "within a definite, specific period of time" to the levels of May 15, 1942.

In a nationwide radio broadcast, Mr. Meany declared that the OPA's attitude in regard to food "a miserable failure" and quoted actual prices of simple, basic foods in American cities today in substantiation of his charge. He listed many foods which have gone up 100 per cent or more since January 1941, and one which has risen 275 per cent.

"A Flying Fortress is a wonderful instrument of war," Mr. Meany declared, "but it is not going to get off the ground. The American worker, as figures prove, is a wonderful producer, but if he does not have sufficient nourishing food in his stomach, he cannot do a job at top speed and with real efficiency."

Speaking over the Mutual system, the AFL secretary-treasurer said:

"Holding the present line on food prices is not enough. The American people are already over their heads. Prices on food staples must be rolled back.

"Can we expect this to be done under the present governmental policy? No, but it is not according to the senior assistant to the Director of OPA, in a remark of 3 or 4 days ago, that there is nothing in the President's hold-the-line executive order of April 8 to prevent price adjustments. This statement was evidently made to appease certain food producers by indicating that the President's order did not prevent OPA from allowing prices to go even higher than they are today."

Pointing out that the men and women of American labor are producing planes, ships, tanks, guns and ammunition "at the fastest rates ever attained," Mr. Meany said:

"The cost of food, generally, has doubled in the past 2 years. What does this mean to the American worker and to his wife and family? It means that the American housewife, confronted with sky-high prices and desiring to discharge her responsibility of keeping the war workers in her family nourished so that they can produce for victory, has no alternative but to pass up the foods which are essential to a balanced diet but which are now beyond the reach of the average family's pocketbook."

Mr. Meany conceded that many workers are now earning more than they formerly made, but emphasized that many workers, millions of them, "have received no increase in pay in the last 3 years, or have received purely nominal increases amounting to 3 or 5 cents an hour, or $1.50 to $2.00 per week." The average pay envelope for all manufacturing industries, including the war industries, holds only $41 each week, he said.

Mr. Meany asked that President Roosevelt, under his wartime powers, issue an executive order to the OPA "not stating in general terms that food prices should be held down, but stating in definite, specific terms that retail food prices must be rolled back within a definite, specific period of time to the levels which prevailed on May 15, 1942."

"Only in this way," said the AFL leader, "can the American worker be assured that he will be unhampered in his efforts to perform the tasks that he is not only willing to do but that he is anxious to do—to produce all the weapons of war that our nation needs for final and complete victory."

Nelson Reports Definite Progress In Program For Incentive Payment

Washington, D. C.—WPB Chairman Donald M. Nelson told Washington reporters that "we are making considerable progress" with the Management-Labor Council to work out a workable incentive payment program which would be acceptable to both groups.

WPB has "never contemplated any general edict coming from Washington on incentive plans for all of industry," Nelson declared. "Whatever we have contemplated has been selected with regard to the needs of industry, the need for it, and the ability of labor and the management to get along happily under it."

Thus far, he emphasized, discussions have been in a preliminary stage and he expressed confidence that any suitable plan worked out would be applied on a plant-to-plant basis through labor and management at the plant level.

The recently established WPB Management-Labor Council includes President Green, Washington; Sidney Hillman, Philip Murray of CIO, Eric Johnston of United States Chamber of Commerce, Frederick Crawford of National Association of Manufacturers and one additional representative of each of the four organizations.

"I don't know of a better way of approaching any production problems than that of management and labor working together in the plant, both wanting to do more," Nelson said in his press conference. "I have never seen any other method that will produce as good results as voluntary agreement. Where management-labor committees have been established wholeheartedly by management and labor, I haven't seen a single instance where it hasn't been successful—and many have been helping solve production problems. Some of the suggestions that have come out of this cooperation have been magnificent in production results."

He revealed that some of the production ideas developed through labor-management committees have been shared with other allies to help them in their production problems.

Workers In War Plants Advised To Spend Vacations Near Home

Washington, D. C.—Vacations for war workers—considered essential by the Government—should be spent as near to home as possible, the Office of War Information said in a summary of the vacation policy of its principal Federal production agencies.

The Government policy, OWI pointed out, has two broad objectives: first, vacations are a good idea—they help boost morale and thereby help production; second, they are in themselves a form of "pre-induction training." In furtherance that vacations be planned in the light of the "no-unnecessary-travel" policy of the Office of Defense Transportation.

It is recognized that some vacation travel is useful and inevitable, but it is generally felt that, as in the case of the movement of troops, vacation travel movements can and must be cut deeply.

The agencies — War Production Board, War Manpower Commission, Office of Defense Transportation, War Food Administration, and the Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services—agreed that workers should plan their vacations with as little travel as possible. The "no-unnecessary-travel" slogan, cross-country trips by private auto, bus or rail delay the winning of the war. However, they pointed out, it is possible to get a complete change of scenery and environment by going to or less from most places in the United States.

They made no specific recommendations as to workers in non-essential industries, but their statement reflected the views of President Roosevelt in a statement issued on March 16, 1942, that the war effort "must be the primary task of everybody in the nation" and "human beings must work for long, continued and prolonged work for very long without obtaining a proper balance between work on the one hand and recreation on the other." The President emphasized "it must be borne in mind, however, that 'recreation as usual' is just as bad as 'business as usual.'"

PRODUCTION FACTS REVEAL LABOR IS DOING WAR JOB

Indianapolis, Ind.—America's swelling volume of war production shows Paul Hardin more clear over the complete American worker knows that this is his war and that he is ready to do all that is required to win it, Wendell Lund, director of WPB's Labor Production Division, declared at a United Labor for Victory rally at the Murat Theatre.

"In the coming months, as we enter the stretch for full production, we must be more clear over the complete cooperation of labor and management," Lund declared. "Plant labor-management committees are the only medium through which to harness the full energies of free workers and industry and to provide the sense of responsibility and self-discipline which will enable us to democracy to beat any system of Axis slavery."

WOMEN GAIN PAY RATES EQUAL TO MEN'S WAGES

Washington, D. C.—Over 500 companies have equalized rates paid to women with rates paid to men for comparable work under the authority of the National War Labor Board's general order permitting such wage or salary adjustments without prior WLB approval.

ORDNANCE PLANT WORKERS CHOOSE AFL AFFILIATES

New Brighton, Minn.—In elections at Twin Cities Ordnance Plant to choose collective bargaining representatives, production workers, machinists and guards voted big majorities for unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, Organizer Wm. F. Wright reported.

Green Challenges Industry To Join With Labor For Post-War Program

Plan Now For Peace Production And Jobs For All, He Urges

New York City — Immediate action by management, labor, agriculture and the Government to prepare now for vastly expanded post-war production which will provide jobs for all was demanded by AFL President William Green.

Speaking at a "unity luncheon" climaxing the annual meeting of the United States Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Green declared that the notable services rendered by industry, workers and farmers in this war "merely scratch the surface of the potential benefits that continued and enhanced unity can bring to the American people after the war is over."

"As the representative of six million workers," he continued, "I hereby give you my solemn pledge that labor will go more than halfway toward a meeting of the minds and hearts of sector. We are ready to work with you and serve with you and sacrifice with you, come what may, for democracy's glorious victory and for the ultimate triumph of free enterprise."

Other speakers at the same luncheon included Eric Johnston, president of the United States Chamber of Commerce, Owen D. Young and Ed O'Neal, head of the Farm Bureau Federation.

Mr. Green emphasized that "free enterprise" is not the sole prerogative of the owners and managers of industry. He said:

"It is a freedom shared and jealously guarded by every American worker and farmer. It is an economic freedom—the freedom of opportunity—embodied in just and important and just as basic in the hearts of American citizens as their political and religious freedoms.

"At present, the challenge to free enterprise comes from our enemies in this war who deny that it is efficient, adaptable to modern needs or deserving of preservation. Our answer to that challenge is to enlist greater and greater production of ships, planes, ships, tanks and guns which will inevitably crush the proponents of slave industry, slave agriculture and slave labor.

"When victory is attained and the war ends, a new and even greater challenge will arise to confront free enterprise. We can see it coming now. It casts its menacing shadow upon industry, labor and agriculture alike. The answer to that challenge by each of us—will we measure up? Will we be able to produce the products of peace on the same scale that we are now producing the weapons of war? Will we be able to find markets for our goods? Will we be able to do this or will our entire economy collapse?

"You, the representatives of American industry, and we, the representatives of labor, can and must solve these problems alone, nor can labor, nor can the farmers, nor the Government. But it is my unshakable conviction that we can solve them together. And it is my unshakable purpose to press for such unity of action and such unity attained in the spirit of fear or in an atmosphere of misunderstanding. So let me present a few plain facts to you in behalf of the six million members of the American Federation of Labor.

"We believe sincerely in free enterprise. We recognize the right to own and manage private property. We concede that the owners and managers of private industry and farms are entitled to a fair profit. We, of the American Federation of Labor, have no intention or desire to abridge, appropriate or interfere with the functions of ownership and management.

"At the same time, we ask that private industry acknowledge labor's equal right to free enterprise. We ask that management recognize the right of workers to organize into free and democratic trade unions of their own choosing. We ask that the owners and managers of private industry agree to bargain collectively with those trade unions representing their workers. We ask that management disavow any intention or desire to weaken, destroy or dominate the trade unions of labor. And, finally, we ask that the right of workers to share in the responsibilities and conditions commensurate with American standards of living be assured.

"If we can reach a national understanding on these principles—a clear-cut, honest and sincere agreement to abide by and apply the rules of the game and to abide by them—then we can tackle the difficulties and reconversion with every assurance of success.

"Just as industry resists undue Government interference with the operation of its every-day affairs, organized labor resents any undue Government intervention in the free enterprise of the trade-union movement. To my way of thinking, the sooner we can return the operations of Government to their normal and necessary sphere, the better for our American democracy. We can hasten this process once can-and-dog conflicts between management and labor are banished and harmonious, cooperative relationships become the rule."

Late News Bulletin!

Washington, D. C.—Action on two fronts to relieve the wage-squeeze and job-freeze inflicted on American workers appeared imminent as this edition went to press. Reports were:

1—That the members of the National War Labor Board have agreed unanimously on a plan to permit pay adjustments to correct manifest injustices and are waiting to submit their recommendations to President Roosevelt at the first opportunity.

2—That the War Manpower Commission is preparing to consult with Economic Stabilization Director Byrnes on a proposal to relax the job-freezing regulations so as to permit the transfer of workers to higher-paying jobs under certain conditions.

It was further reported that the threat of an impending strike in the coal mines at the dictation of John L. Lewis may be a factor in delaying these constructive reforms.

AFL Urges Congress To Renew Reciprocal Trade Agreements Law

Washington, D. C.—AFL President William Green, appearing before the House Ways and Means Committee, urged Congress to renew President Roosevelt's authority to conclude reciprocal trade agreements with other countries.

"The Congress owes this duty to the peoples now enslaved by Fascism, the millions who hope and long for the day when they attain their freedom and join with their liberators in the establishment of a lasting peace founded upon freedom, security and mutual trust among nations."

Chairman Doughton of the Ways and Means Committee congratulated Mr. Green upon the statement he presented and added:

"The people of the United States owe you an everlasting debt for the contribution you have made to the war effort by maintaining industrial peace and by expediting production."

Mr. Green emphasized that it would be a tragic mistake to change our policy with regard to reciprocal trade agreements in the midst of a war when we must depend so heavily for aid and materials upon the nations of South America and other countries with whom such agreements have been negotiated. He added:

"What is necessary now, in the midst of the war, should reverse this policy by refusing to renew the authority for reciprocal trade pacts? In my opinion such refusal would shake to the very foundations the faith of our allies and of other nations in our leadership and our aims in this war. Such action would arouse suspicion over our motives and cast distrust over our willingness to participate in the establishment of a just and equitable economic order after the war.

"Most important of all, such refusal would undermine the war effort itself. It would arouse distrust in our ability, provide an enemy with a powerful weapon of disruption, and lead our allies to look elsewhere for sources of economic stability and economic strength than America's post-war industry can give.

"We must win this war. We cannot win it alone. The logic of our declared policy binds us to our allies in the present hostilities and in the future peace. The very foundation of that logic must be pursued to conclusion if victory is to be won and if victory is to bring to all the nations of mankind the opportunity for economic growth.

"The principle of reciprocity in international trade is paramount to the solution of our postwar economic problems. The continued application of this principle is essential to the achievement of full employment and to the preservation of our system of free enterprise. Thus the renewal of the reciprocal trade policy not only accords with the promises expressed to the United States to the peoples of the world, but also coincides with our own best interests.

"The evidence is conclusive that reciprocal trade agreements have made possible a substantial increase in the exports of American goods, resulting in a notable increase of employment in the industries concerned. This increased employment in export industries exceeded by far any possible displacement of labor which might have been brought about by the concessions we have made to other countries.

"Reciprocal trade agreements did not open the floodgates to the mass importation of foreign-made goods. The relative status of the United States as an importer from the trade agreement countries compared with the non-trade agreement countries remained stable from 1934 through 1939. On the other hand, the ratio of increase of American exports to trade agreement countries almost doubled in comparison with our exports to non-agreement countries.

"In this connection it is important to note that the largest share of benefits given by the American workers from the reciprocal trade policy through these exports has been the higher wage standards. The record shows, at the same time, that the imports under the trade agreement program did not increase but imported low wage standards and have not resulted in job displacement as was feared by the opponents of the policy. This evidence demonstrates that the net effect of the program was to benefit the American worker by sustaining and expanding employment in the recession of 1938.

"In the light of these facts I submit that the United States must not suffered, but gained, from the application of the reciprocal trade policy. The policy enabled the United States to extend world markets for both agricultural and manufactured products.

"Assurance of outlets for our goods in a peace-time world market is imperative if a recurring depression is to be averted. Equally imperative is the assurance of cooperative relationship to other countries with which we are to trade. The responsibility for this assurance rests with Congress, which can labor and the workers of other nations who are fighting this war with us look to Congress for assurance of responsibility and to make clear and decisive American declaration of intentions toward the part it will assume in postwar reconstruction."

Donations By American Labor Build Ten British Workers Relief Units

New York City.—More than half a million dollars contributed by American labor will help to build ten relief projects for British workers in 1943, it was revealed by Matthew Woll, president of United Nations Relief.

The donations of organized labor will enable The British War Relief Society, acting in conjunction with the British Trades Union Congress, to provide "rest breaks," hospitals, rest homes, welfare and canteen units for relief units for embattled British workers.

Herbert de N. Cruger, representative in Great Britain of The British War Relief Society of America, gave graphic descriptions of the projects' effects.

Most important, said Mr. Cruger, are eight "rest-break" homes for men and women throughout England, Wales and Scotland. These men and women, exhausted and worn out after nearly four years of labor under heavy air-blitzing, are given a brief respite from their exacting duties and are enabled to return to their jobs refreshed and invigorated.

"This is how Britain meets the problem of absenteeism," commented Mr. Woll. "The problem was initially attacked with a hue and cry by politicians and others who impugned the patriotism of British workers. Labor Minister Ernest Bevin insisted from the beginning that absenteeism resulted from sickness, fatigue, and exhaustion. Time has proved that the country found his analysis to be correct."

The estimated cost for equipping these eight "rest-breaks," Mr. Cruger said, is $50,000. Since labor and materials for construction are not available the government has commandeered eight large buildings with the consent of the owners. Because of the wealth of British workers in charity, each worker will pay a small sum for room and board. In this way it is hoped that the "rest-breaks" will become self-sufficient.

Men and women in factories and mines, who show signs of being worn out by long stretches of overtime, are certified by examining physicians as in need of rest. Then labor and men and women will be accommodated in these rest-homes during the year.

CANTEEN FOR RED CROSS BUILT BY UNION FUNDS

Portland, Ore.—Tired and hungry defense passing through Portland will be provided with a convenient spot to rest and refresh themselves as the result of a $15,000 contribution by the Red Cross by Steam and Marine Fitters Local 125, United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters (AFL). The money will be used to erect a building in the Union Station to house a Red Cross canteen and a USO lounge.

The lunch room, staffed by Red Cross volunteer canteen workers, will serve hot meals without charge to servicemen. The lounge will be equipped and staffed by the USO.

OWI ASKS STARR TO JOIN UNIT TO VISIT ENGLAND

New York.—Mark Starr, educational director of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union has been invited by the Office of War Information, to join a contingent of outstanding American educators who will visit England during the summer months, union headquarters announced today.

The invitation was invited by the OWI and the British Ministry of Information including Mayor Frank Lausche of Cleveland, Clarence Dykstra, president of the University of Wisconsin, and Frederick P. Keppel, director of the Progressive Education Association.

Enact Social Security Plan Now, Watt Says On "Labor For Victory"

Washington, D. C.—Congress should enact promptly the President's recommendations for broader social security and representatives of Government, private industry and organized labor should begin the formulation of plans for an expanded post-war production program, Robert J. Watt, International Representative of the American Federation of Labor, declared in a "Labor For Victory" broadcast.

Pointing out that the primary peace objective is the "establishment of an international tribunal, backed up by force, to maintain the no-war pledge that each nation will make," Watt said "it will take more than the no-war pledge that each nation will make." Some mechanism to work out plans for disarmament of all aggressor nations," Mr. Watt said, "we must also prevent any plunder of or revenge against the common people of the defeated nations. We are going to have a real enduring peace, and we should see to it that the independence and territory of the victorious nations are fully restored."

On the question of domestic post-war problems, Mr. Watt said:

"First, we must make plans now for post-war production which will approach the volume of our present war production. Second, we must provide adequate social insurance to carry our people over the period during which industry will be forced to shut down while reconverting plants and machinery to peace-time production.

"We must have insurance for all until we can provide jobs for all. We've got to get ready for the post-war emergency when we invite industry's chaos in America. Millions of men and women now employed in war factories will be suddenly thrown out of their jobs. Millions of American soldiers returning from the battlefields will find all doors closed to them. Do we want men in uniform selling apples on the streets as they were forced to do after the last war? Do we want more breadlines in America, or hunger marches on Washington? We need specific measures to prevent this catastrophe, Mr. Watt said.

"Congress must enact the President's new social security program and especially the provisions for decent, adequate and uniform unemployment insurance to tide over those who will lose their jobs when the war ends and to carry over those discharged from the armed forces until they can find private employment.

"The Government should invite leaders of industry and labor to sit down together to work out plans for a tremendously expanded post-war production program. There will be a huge market in America after the war for the things we can't buy now because production has ceased during the war. There will also be tremendous demand for goods in Europe, where starved and shattered nations turn to war. It seems only common sense for us to make a planned and concerted effort to take advantage of these opportunities. That's what an immediate conference on post-war production with the Government, private industry and organized labor participating could accomplish.

"Organized labor is ready to act. So are many of the industrial statesmen leaders of business, such as Eric Johnston, president of the United States Chamber of Commerce, and big industrialists, such as Henry Kaiser. The people are ready to act. Industry is ready to act in hand, but perhaps a sparkplug is needed, an initial push to get the wheels rolling. If we say it up to the leaders of our Government to provide that push and to do it now."